

THAME TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee held on 8 November 2016 at 7.30pm in the Upper Chamber, Thame Town Hall

Present: Cllrs B Austin (Chairman), D Bretherton (Deputy Chairman), P Cowell, M Dyer, H Fickling and A Midwinter

Officers

G Hunt, Town Clerk

G Markland, Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Officer

A Oughton, Committee Services Officer

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Dixon (Personal), Dodds (Personal), Emery (Council Business), Lambert (Business) and Stiles (Unwell).

2 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Public Participation & Public Questions

There were no applications to address the Council.
There were no questions put to the Council.

4 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5 Working Groups

a) NPCC Co-Ordination Working Group

A request had been made to the NPCC from one of the Residents Associations to establish ways of greater involvement. Cllr Austin reported that he had offered to attend a PEORA meeting for a Q&A session. Members of all the Residents Associations could also attend the NPCC meetings.

The Town Clerk added that possibly two new Residents Associations may be formed. One at Moreton where residents had started the process with support from the Town Council and one at Victoria Mead where the unofficial Residents Association had requested formal recognition.

b) Infrastructure Delivery Plan Working Group

Cllr Bretherton reported that he was not aware of any new funding coming forward at present. He had met with the Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Officer (NPCO) to go through the s106 agreements. The NPCO would continue to press the District Council for updates.

The Town Clerk reported that he had been included in email correspondence in which SODC had entrusted TOE2 with s106 monies for green and open spaces in Thame. The sum quoted in the email did not equate with the sum of money the Town Council was expecting. This was the second tranche of funding, the first tranche of £6.5k we understand to have been awarded to the Cuttle Brook Nature Reserve and River Thame Trust.

The Town Clerk had contacted TOE2 and stated that the Town Council envisaged that the allocated funds would be pooled towards a larger more meaningful project rather distributed piecemeal. There is an expectation of approximately £183k in total, including £47k in the near future.

Members were disappointed that the District Council had not contacted the Town Council directly to advise that the funds were being transferred to TOE2 to distribute. After some discussion it was suggested that the Chairman of the NPCC write to the Leader of the District Council to seek clarity on the process.

c) Green Living Plan Working Group

Cllr Fickling reported that the working group had met on 18 October 2016 and the minutes, together with additional information had been circulated with the Committee papers. The RSA group had set out their approach for the Green Living Plan and were working on a framework. It was thought that this would be the first Green Living Plan to be published and so it was all very new. New members had joined the working group from the community, each with expertise in differing areas.

Cllr Fickling had attended the South Oxfordshire Sustainability (SOS) meeting with representatives from around Oxfordshire. Useful discussions took place on locally sourced food, air quality, water conservation – encouraging people at grass roots to use less water through education and neighbourhood planning.

It was noted that despite continued efforts to communicate with both Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire County Councils on the Thame / Haddenham cycle route no meaningful responses had been received.

d) Town Centre Working Group

Cllr Emery had sent her apologies. Cllr Fickling reported that the main focus of the working group had been to support Thame in the Great British High Street Competition. The Judges visit on Friday had gone well and everyone had worked hard to make it a success.

The next event would be the visit of the Small Business Saturday bus on Monday 14 November 2016 between 2pm-4pm. The bus would be a taster / advertisement for Small Business Saturday on Saturday 3 December.

Cllr Emery will now provide input as required as the new Market Town Co-Ordinator refines the actions plan further, based on a wide variety of inputs.

e) Transport Plan Working Group

Cllr Cowell reported that a meeting had taken place with a small number of the working group members to set out the framework and strategy for moving forward. The next step will be to arrange a date for the whole working group to meet to discuss that framework.

The abdication of responsibility as a Highway Authority by Oxfordshire County Council in relation to Elms Road was also mentioned.

f) Community Facilities Working Group

Attempts to set a date for a planning meeting of the working group had been frustrating. The latest date suggested has now been found to be unsuitable. The Chairman and Deputy Chairman would let the Town Clerk know their availability and it was hoped a new date would be finalised shortly.

The Town Clerk reported that representatives from the schools, churches, performing artists and the Cattle Market Action Group were keen to be involved. One of the topics for the next Lord Williams's School 'Off Timetable Day', on 17 January 2017, will be the future of the Cattle Market.

Following discussion it was agreed that the Town Council should be proactive in producing a development brief for the Cattle Market site. This would be one of the tasks for the working group. Further details would also be established from SODC.

The Chairman outlined a response from the SODC Economic Development Manager in respect of questions raised regarding the District Council's intentions on the future disposal of the Cattle Market site. SODC's strategic property advisers, Cushman & Wakefield, have been retained to develop options for the site and we are informed SODC would subsequently be happy to discuss these options. The meeting felt that Thame Town Council should be involved during the formation of the options, not afterwards, and asked the Chairman to communicate this view.

g) Burial Space Working Group

The Town Clerk reported that the developers of Site C were keen to submit a planning application for the new cemetery. There were a number of different options which the developers would like to discuss with the working group. The Town Clerk would progress a date for a meeting. The working group were also looking after the transfer of Priest End to burial space and progress is being reported through the Community, Leisure & Recreation Committee.

6 Neighbourhood Plan / SODC

Members noted the report on current discussions on the protection given by a Neighbourhood Plan when there is a lack of five year land supply at Planning Authority level. The NPCO stated that this was still work in progress and further positive evidence was being established to support the Town Council's case.

7 Neighbourhood Plan Amendment Process / Life beyond a Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan Bill was progressing through Parliament. The Bill provides for Neighbourhood Plans to be amended, subject to regulations. The NPCO had submitted a response to the consultation with a particular emphasis on ensuring that decision making was carried out at the correct level and the opportunity had also been taken to lobby on the five year land supply issue.

8 Affordable Housing

Cllr Austin reported that there had been wide publicity of the Town Council's statement on shared ownership with information appearing in the Town Council's newsletter, website and articles in Thame.net and the Thame Gazette. The next phase would be a poster campaign around the town followed by a workshop in the Upper Chamber in the Spring.

A meeting had taken place with Mark Giddins of SOHA who was extremely knowledgeable on the subject of Shared Ownership and agreed to provide case studies and key contacts for building societies who specialised in the type of lending required for shared ownership.

9 Employment Land Provision in Thame

The Town Council's submission to the District Planning Committee at the recent discussion of the planning application for Goodson Industrial Mews had highlighted the erosion of existing employment land in Thame.

Other potential examples of erosion included the Thame Service Station site and more recently the submitted proposals for the Old Police Station site in Greyhound lane. Cllr Dyer reported that he had received information that the Tesco site was to be marketed in access of £10m raising uncertainty on the future of the Howland Road site.

It was agreed that a lot had happened since the Neighbourhood Plan had been adopted. With both SODC and Aylesbury Vale District Council consulting on their Local Plans there would be a need to review the Thame Neighbourhood Plan in the next few years. With this in mind now would be a good time to identify the employment needs for Thame.

The main topic for discussion at the next meeting of the Thame Business Forum will be to start gathering evidence towards identifying current deficiencies and future needs for industrial and commercial land and infrastructure. Dependent on the discussions a decision would be made as to whether to set up a working group to look at Employment Land.

10 Intensification of Site D

The NPCO had sent the District Council a letter informing them of our complete rejection of Persimmon's proposal to increase the number of houses built on land west of Thame Park Road. The letter was sent in response to Persimmon submitting a pre-application to the District Council, following their recent screening opinion. The NPCO highlighted concerns around cramming and poor relationship with the surrounding countryside and publicly accessible open space.

11 Developer Approaches

Members noted that two further developer approaches had been received and the "no meeting policy" had been explained to both.

12 Neighbourhood Plan Support

Cllr Dyer reported that Councillors and Officers had been invited to speak to three different audiences before Christmas. Cllr Dyer, the Town Clerk and the NPCO will present to students at Oxford Brooks University on Friday 11 November 2016.

South Hams Neighbourhood Planning had extended an invitation to Cllr Dyer to speak and the Town Clerk will speak to the SLCC Berkshire Branch about 'Life Beyond a Neighbourhood Plan'.

13 Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring and Delivery Report / Newsletter

Members noted that since the last meeting of the Committee, some further progress had been made on drafting the required updates to the Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring and Delivery Report as last published in January 2016, but given the scale of reactive work undertaken in the same period, that the report is not yet ready for review. It seems likely that it will need to be called the annual update this time.

14 Market Town Co-ordinator

It was noted that Becky Reid commenced employment as Market Town Co-Ordinator on 1 November 2016, working a fully flexible 21 hours per week. Becky had spent a lot time during her first week supporting the Great British High Street team.

The meeting concluded at 8.40pm

Signed
Chairman, 20 December 2016